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ABSTRACT

In 1994, 10 nonprofit institutions in Providence, Rhode Island, joined forces to form Health and Education Leadership for Providence (HELP), as a way to improve the health and education of the city's students. This document presents an interview with Neil A. Corkery, executive director of HELP, in which he described the process of developing health and education programs supported by nonprofit hospitals and universities in the school district. Pursuing city or school-nonprofit partnerships involve nine basic steps: (1) form a special committee to identify services; (2) develop a list of potential partnership initiatives; (3) identify potential supportive nonprofit initiatives; (4) involve school administrators and teachers in the planning process; (5) identify funding strategies and lobby state and local legislators to provide incentives that would stimulate nonprofit participation; (6) publicize the results of an executive meeting held with local leaders and nonprofit executives; (7) establish the coalition and form representative committees; (8) conduct a campaign to educate constituents; and (9) work with the media to publicize activities. Tips for working with the media are also highlighted. (LMI)

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Updating School Board Policies

A component of the National Education Policy Network of the National School Boards Association provided to NSBA National Affiliates and NEPN subscribers

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY NETWORK

Volume 26/Number 2
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In October 1993, representatives from ten independent, nonprofit Providence, Rhode Island hospitals and universities met to create a new partnership in the interest of their city. Members of this group, or coalition, met regularly for six months helping each other better understand the "real" problems facing their city.

It was clear that these ten partners, (Brown University, Butler Hospital, Johnson & Wales University, The Miriam Hospital, Providence College, Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Medical Center, St. Joseph Hospital and Women & Infants Hospital) produced a lot of what is successful and good for Providence. But it was determined that more needed to be done in the face of the many challenges confronting the city. Spurred to action by Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., Providence's hospital and higher education community realized the need for a collaborative effort aimed at the improvement of the health and education of the city's school children was imperative.

10 non-profit institutions in Providence, Rhode Island join forces to improve the health and education of the city's students.

Health & Education Leadership for Providence (HELP) was the result. On April 28, 1994, the new organization unveiled a set of initiatives, based on the Providence Blueprint for Education (PROBE) and Healthy People 2000, designed to improve the lives of the people of Providence. These programs will enhance and expand services for children and families including continuing education opportunities for teachers, a mobile medical unit which visits schools, and a housing program.

Working with Providence school system Superintendent Arthur Zarrella, HELP debuted through its "summer institute" program designed to prepare administrators, teachers, students and families for the restructuring of Providence's three comprehensive high schools. This educational reform program allowed participants to focus on the issues revolving around the planned subdivision of the three schools into "academies."

The idea of developing city-nonprofit partnerships is one that appears to be catching on in other areas, as well.

Currently, Vision for Health, a group of Baltimore, MD public and private agencies (city health department, Bon Secours Hospital, Community Building in Partnership, Liberty Medical Center, Total Health Care, University of Maryland at Baltimore School of Nursing, and the University of Maryland Medical System), is providing universal health care for the 10,000 residents of one Baltimore community. And the National Health & Education Consortium with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has produced a report explaining the concept of school clinics that helps teachers understand how health affects a child's education.

Representatives of HELP are currently speaking with members of Philadelphia's health and education community as plans to export their vision and expertise continue to stimulate interest in education circles.

The following is an interview with Neil A. Corkery, Executive Director of HELP, in which he describes the process of developing health and education programs supported by nonprofit hospitals and universities located in the school district. Mr. Corkery is a former Warwick state representative and associate director of government and community affairs at Brown University. He was superintendent of Providence schools and an elementary and middle schools principal.

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Updating: One may speculate that the Providence School Department faces many of the same challenges as urban school districts around the country. School violence, potentially unhealthy students, inadequate funding, school restructuring, at-risk students, immigrant students, parental involvement and meeting public expectations are just a few of the things that contribute to making the education of children a complex and difficult task. And, as many cities also have discovered, attention to these challenges comes from many sources.

Corkery: Yes, you're correct. Like many other urban centers across America, particularly in the Northeast, Providence has been a city in transition. Changing demographics have staunched the flow of population decline. The result has been an increase in school enrollment from a low of 17,500 in the 1980's to the current school census of 23, 500 students. Likewise, the faces in this rising population reflect the diversity that makes up the rich new tapestry of students. At the same time, the change in demographics has presented a challenge to both the health care system and the schools.

Updating: For the benefit of our readers, could you elaborate at little on some of the specific child-related educational and health condition challenges present in Providence prior to 1993 ?

Corkery: Naturally, basic requirements for school registration often find the new Americans struggling to comply. Childhood immunizations, considered by some a basic right, are often out of reach for many families and result in delays in school entrance or even exclusion for long periods of time. In fact, one of the HELP Coalition's first initiatives was a series of three immunization clinics set up at Central High School in Providence in September 1994. HELP conducted the three clinics in response to the list of over 400 students excluded from school because of inadequate immunizations. This emergency HELP-sponsored activity helped insure that a population at risk received health care and were promptly enrolled in school.

Updating: When the mayor announced that nonprofit organizations in Providence needed to do more to help the city, more than the jobs they provide and revenues they generate, what were the reactions from the nonprofits? Were any incentives established by the local or state governments that would make the idea more appealing?

Corkery: The most significant development from my point of view as a former state legislator and government relations officer was the nonprofit hospital and independent colleges and universities' willingness to maintain an open line of communication with the mayor's office. The Coalition went hand-in-hand to the state legislature and the governor's office to support increasing funding for the state's Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program. The PILOT program (Rhode Island is one of two states funding such a program, Connecticut being the other) compensates communities which have tax-exempt institutions within their jurisdiction. Fully funded, the program reimburses those communities at a rate of 25 percent of what they would have collected in tax revenue were those institutions not tax-exempt. Current state funding provides Providence with $7 million in PILOT monies.

The Coalition also delivered on its promise to establish a network of initiatives to relieve the city of some of its health and education burden.

Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., joining the representatives of the ten independent colleges and hospitals in announcing this unprecedented effort, took the opportunity to declare, "I am very impressed with the efforts of the colleges and hospitals and with the programs we're announcing this morning. These efforts represent an acknowledgement of the problems faced by the City of Providence and an understanding of what needs to be done to address these problems. It's a good first step," the Mayor said.

Updating: How did the community at-large react to the mayor's statement?

Corkery: With over 200 representatives from civic, corporate, religious, and community organizations participating in the ceremony announcing the formation of the HELP Coalition and its eleven initiatives, there was broad acceptance of the alliance's objectives and the mayor's willingness to cooperate with the fledgling organization. It is the goal of the organization to inform the greater community at-large about HELP initiatives and then engage them in the development of this unique collaborative. Program successes will significantly shape the public support of our objective.

Updating: Did the mayor's office provide any guidance in the develop-

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ment of what was to become the coalition of nonprofits now known as Health & Education Leadership for Providence (HELP)?

Corkery: Health and Education Leadership for Providence (HELP), through its CEOs and the assistance of its government relations officers, touched base with the mayor's office at each step of the development of the coalition. The result of these periodic meetings was a mutual respect and trust that this unprecedented collaboration was an authentic effort to assist the City in its difficulties.

In addition, we surveyed administrators and staff in the Providence School District's central office and solicited their input into the plan and design of education and health initiatives. This was accomplished by meeting regularly with the District's central office staff.

Updating: In addition to surveying the School Department, what other mechanism was used to determine need and focus for HELP activities?

Corkery: HELP steering committee members relied heavily on the 38 recommendations outlined in the landmark PROBE report. These specific recommendations were developed as a result of an extensive community effort, including a survey of teachers, parents, and students. Among the major recommendations later validated by Ted Sizer and others was the need to develop a comprehensive professional development program in the schools.

Updating: Many persons feel that a willingness to cooperate with like organizations is not always obvious among nonprofits. It must have been difficult to arrange early meetings of the city's nonprofit organizations. How was an environment of cooperation cultivated so the first meetings could take place? Were some of the nonprofits already involved in programs focused on education and health issues in Providence?

Corkery: I'm not sure I would agree with your observation that nonprofit organizations are generally reluctant to cooperate with like organizations. Actually, the nonprofit hospitals and independent colleges and universities already had strong trade associations with which they affiliated. What is unique about the new association is the partnership between the health care institutions and institutions of higher education. The uniqueness lies in the fact that while each was a major non-profit sector, their goals and objectives were not always viewed as mutual. One of the results of this collaboration was a new found respect for and greater understanding of each other's mission.

Neil Corkery

"The importance of Board involvement [in the HELP coalition] is in the ownership and awareness of the significance of the programs we are offering."

It should further be noted that although each of the ten institutions which comprise HELP were already involved in the programs focused on health and/or education, Brown University, Providence College, Johnson & Wales University, and Rhode Island School of Design as well as Butler Hospital, The Miriam Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Medical Center, St. Joseph Hospital, and Womens & Infants Hospital — combined — have contributed over 100 programs to the city. This Coalition was the first time that all ten institutions collaborated to leverage their resources and capital in a strategic initiative.

Updating: What were the key political issues facing the group and how were they either resolved or, at least, settled, so impediments to progress could be set aside?

Corkery: The key political issues facing the group were maintaining a unified agenda and strategy and insuring that the programs and initiatives designed for implementation were not political and were, indeed, value-added services benefitting people in all areas of the city. The guiding principle driving all deliberations was the concept that we were designing these initiatives "because it is the right thing to do."

Updating: When did anyone from the Providence School Department get invited to participate in the program? What role did the Providence School Board have in the development of the coalition? Were Board policies developed or needed to accommodate HELP programs?

Corkery: Early on in the process, members of the steering committee, mainly senior staff administrators from the ten institutions, met with the Superintendent of Schools, Arthur M. Zarrella, members of his staff and the President of the local teachers union, Phyllis Tennian. In addition, we had the luxury of having Dr. Theodore R. Sizer of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University, and Dr. Edward D. Eddy, former President of the University of Rhode Island and chief architect of the Providence Blueprint for Education (PROBE) Report on the state of the Providence Schools, as part of our strategic planning team.

Theodore Sizer and Edward Eddy brought great credibility to our efforts and school officials brought their input and needs to the table and validated our proposals.

While no board policies were amended to accommodate HELP programs, both Marion F. Avarista, President of the Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island and I appeared before the Providence School Board to present

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our collaborative initiative involving the mobile medical unit initiative. The response of the Board was overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

Updating: Do you believe involvement by the Board in this process is beneficial?

Corkery: The importance of Board involvement is in the ownership and awareness of the significance of the programs we are offering. Even now, we strive to make people aware that these several initiatives contribute to an enhanced quality of life in the capital city.

Updating: What effect did school principals and teachers participation have on the program?

Corkery: Principals and nurse teachers contributed significantly to the success of our medical van program. In addition, through our ongoing series of professional development activities, we have made a concerted effort to target principals, teachers, parents and students as key participants in the school restructuring proposals.

Updating: Were the schools ready to accommodate HELP programs or did they feel disruptions would occur? And, did the schools erect obstacles to planning and implementation or were they receptive to the linkages with the nonprofits?

Corkery: Schools were most cooperative in welcoming HELP into the educational arena. Immunization clinics at Central High School could not have been successful without the great cooperation and support of the school principal and staff.

Updating: This partnership between government and the private nonprofit sector on such a large scale is unique. What aspects of the relationship do you find to be positive and rewarding and, conversely, what aspects do you find negative and or disadvantageous?

Corkery: I believe Vartan Gregorian, President of Brown University, best described the mutuality of interest that exists between the nonprofit institutions and the public sector. "It's of no consolation to be in the first class section on the Titanic. The fortunes of both the City and Brown University are inextricably entwined. What's good for the City is good for Brown."

The parties involved in this fluid partnership were able to rise above the traditional "town-gown" dynamics and frame a larger vision of what the nonprofit public sector relationship should be.

Updating: How important is it to HELP that the public schools are improved? Why?

Corkery: The institutions which comprise the HELP membership draw heavily on Providence residents for their work force. As the major private employers in the City, it's critical that the pool of prospective employees the institutions recruit be well educated and well trained. More importantly, we are acutely aware that the quality of life issues which influence prospective employers and allied business, both nonprofit and for profit, emanate, to a great degree, from the quality of the educational system.

Updating: How does the Coalition plan to measure programmatic success?

Corkery: While the final determiner of programmatic success must be the success of the restructuring efforts at the City's three comprehensive high schools, it is equally important that city residents and consumers of Providence Public School services know that those institutions in other spheres of influence have stepped forward to lend their help in a meaningful fashion. We will measure success in terms of the effectiveness of such broad-based collaboration and its ability to affect a change as the final product itself. If we can demonstrate that such community partnerships are an effective model for change, we will be happy.

Updating: Both the Providence Blueprint for Education (PROBE) and the *Healthy People 2000* reports are credited in various news articles with having identified areas of concern in health and education in the city. What was the driving force behind choosing these reports as a launch pad for the coalition to begin its work? How did HELP determine that PROBE and *Healthy People 2000* held the keys to the preliminary work of the coalition?

Corkery: Most members of the HELP Steering Committee were quite familiar with the Providence Blueprint for Education (PROBE) report. To a lesser degree, the Healthy People 2000 report was familiar to members, as well. Both reports represent intensive, community-wide assessment and analysis of education and health care needs. The PROBE Committee, chaired by Dr. Edward D. Eddy, issued a landmark report on the condition of the Providence Public Schools in 1992. That report contained 38 recommendations to improve the schools. Healthy People 2000 was a similarly significant comprehensive study of the state of health care services in Rhode Island.

Updating: Was other information sought or needed that went beyond these reports?

Corkery: Secure in the belief that significant groundwork had been completed in identifying education and health care needs, steering committee members formed sub-committees in both areas. In addition, sub-committees reached out to school officials, resources at member institutions, community leaders, and interested stakeholders.

Updating: As a result of its work, HELP has proposed 11 new programs that will cost (in-kind and cash) approximately $1.4 million. It would be helpful if you would briefly describe these programs for our readers and, at the same time, provide some insight into how HELP chose these areas.

Corkery: In addition to the 11 programs described in HELP's informational brochure, the Coalition also prepared a business initiative which has since been adopted by the Providence Journal, the state's major newspaper.

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HELP initiatives have already benefitted thousands of school age children. The *Summer Institute for Building Communities of Learners*, a two-week long professional development program for teachers and administrators working in Providence's three comprehensive high schools, is a HELP coalition program begun in August 1994 to prepare the schools to redefine themselves into smaller and more personal communities of learners. Parents and students are also involved in the program.

Via the *Telecommunications Program for Providence Schools*, public schools will be linked to the NASA education system with the installation of receivers in all of Providence's public schools. Since the schools have identified space as the focus of their 1994-95 literacy curriculum, we felt this was a timely direction especially as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Apollo landing on the moon. Additionally, the *Computer Technology Support Center* provides technical assistance to teachers, administrators and students to prepare them for success in the electronic world.

In response to the Department of Education requirement that English as a Second Language (ESL)/Learning English Proficient (LEP) teachers be certified, the coalition provides the coursework, training and facilities necessary to accomplish this task. More than 100 teachers have benefited from this HELP ESL/LEP Initiative to date.

Through the *Adopt-a-Student* program, a youth leadership initiative, and the "Feinstein High School Collaborative", Providence elementary, middle and high school students will be mentored by students from the Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College.

Sponsored by the Rhode Island School of Design, *New Directions in Art Education* provides enhanced professional development for Providence's public school art teachers and will eventually create art education guidelines for K thru 12 art programs in the city.

Other HELP programs include *Christmas in April*, a home rehabilitation program, the *Anti-Graffiti Program* which channels the talents of Providence's graffiti artists, or "taggers", to more productive ends, the Providence "Healthy Kids" Initiative which provides Providence school children with basic health care services and the *Providence Works Initiative*, a special educational opportunity for Providence residents interested in jobs in the health care community.

Updating: Are all program costs the responsibility of HELP?

Corkery: To support these new initiatives, HELP Coalition member institutions have contributed over $1 million during the first year of operation. Coalition program funding ranges from a high of over $300,000 to fund a Summer Institute for Building Communities of Learners to approximately $6,000 for the Feinstein High School Collaborative which includes a program for Public Service. Data provided by the School Department was used by HELP in developing program costs.

Updating: Are the public schools required to pay any portion of the program costs?

Corkery: The public schools' single contribution has been a commitment to provide funding, about $150,000, to complement HELP initiated professional development activities. This support simply restates the Public Schools' commitment to maintain their previous level of financial support for professional development activities. The city has no additional monetary responsibilities in this collaborative effort.

Updating: What HELP program(s) are you especially proud of and why?

Corkery: It's difficult to single out a particular HELP program for recognition. However, the Providence Healthy Kids initiative with its centerpiece mobile medical unit has been a particularly rewarding experience. From conceptual development to partnering with the Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island to implement the actual medical van, the Providence Healthy Kids initiative best exemplifies HELP's goal of providing value-added services to address unmet or under-served needs. As a result, children previously excluded from school because of lack of adequate immunizations have been inoculated and admitted to school. Children who have slipped through the cracks and have been without a "medical home" are now being referred to primary care providers. We are extremely proud of this initiative.

Updating: The development and work of HELP may be replicable in other school districts, both urban and rural. In your opinion, and with your experience, how should school administrators, board members, politicians and others begin to build a similar coalition? If other school districts wish to follow the Providence lead can they use HELP for consultation? How can they contact HELP?

Corkery: Seizing upon Brown University President Vartan Gregorian's admonition that nonprofit institutions can take no solace in their well-being if the community they are surrounded by is suffering, the HELP Coalition is a model that may work in other communities. The most important factors when embarking on such an endeavor are a common commitment, willingness to meet on a regular basis and the appointment or choosing of a facilitator to keep all parties on task.

HELP is proud of its efforts, grateful for the cooperation of the City administration, and hopeful for the future of the Coalition. We would be pleased to share our experience with others who are interested in making a difference in their schools and communities. Questions may be referred to me, Neil A. Corkery, HELP Executive Director, at (401) 453-HELP.

The mayor of Providence was responsible for initiating that city's school-nonprofit partnerships. However, the initiator for these partnering efforts does not have to be a government official. The school board can also become involved in these partnership programs. If your board is interested

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in pursuing city or school-nonprofit partnerships there are some basic steps to follow remembering that many of the activities should be developed and driven concurrently.

- Form a special committee to identify services that might benefit from nonprofit participation;
- Develop a list of potential partnership initiatives;
- Contact the public relations offices of the nonprofit institutions in your district and and begin identifying potential supporters; (Do some homework and identify the community -based programs they already conduct and decide how they might support your initiatives.)
- Bring school administrators and teachers into the planning mix and encourage their participation;
- Identify funding strategies (like PILOT in Rhode Island) and lobby state and local legislators to provide incentives, through statute, that would stimulate participatory action on the part of the nonprofits;
- Arrange to meet with your district's elected officials , county administrator, mayor, council persons, etc., and nonprofit executives in executive session. Then announce the results at an upcoming board meeting and publicize it well in advance; (Don't forget to solicit input from parents and other members of the community during the meeting.)
- Establish the coalition and form representative committees to develop initiatives and oversee their implementation;
- Begin a campaign aimed at educating your constituents about the partnerships;
- Work with the media to publicize your activities;

And, follow the advice of Mr. Cockery:

1. Establish a common commitment to the partnership plan.
2. Institute a requirement and promote a willingness to meet regularly.
3. Select the right project director/facilitator to coordinate the efforts. ■

Communication Tip

You don't have to look very far to find out what's wrong with the public schools. In newspapers, on television, and on the radio are many examples of how test scores have declined, how public confidence in education has slumped and how public schools are lagging behind private schools in providing a quality education.

There are times when any school board might feel that "It's us against them." Although a fair share of negative reports can be found in today's news reports, many features on human achievements and human interest are also reported. Remember, the media needs your board and your schools as sources of community news, but the board's dependency on the media is greater. When the public learns about school board activities it often comes through the news media. Put it to work for your board.

Insure that your messages and activities are delivered accurately to the public by making media relations an integral part of your board's communications policy. Stress the importance of using all forms of news media.

To get the most out of the news media, remember these points:

- Include media relations in your policy on communication.
- Appoint a spokesperson for the board *and* the schools.
- Delegate communication responsibilities clearly.
- Use all the media at your disposal.
- Take advantage of public service announcements and other services offered by various elements of the media.
- Find out what the media wants and give it to them.

Finally, don't depend solely on the media. Your board's policy should evoke a communication program that establishes your board, not the media, as the leader in disseminating information about your schools.

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